



South and **North** of the Border:

Houston Paints Houston



The exhibition was made possible thanks to support from the City of Houston through the Houston Arts Alliance to The Heritage Society.

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Bill Condon, *Main Street Houston*, n.d., Oil, 60 x 50 in.
Collection of Leila and Henri Gadbois, Houston

South and North of the Border: Houston Paints Houston

presented by

Center for the Advancement and Study of Early Texas Art (CASETA)
Houston Earlier Texas Art Group (HETAG)
and
The Heritage Society

August 16 - November 24, 2018

The Heritage Society Museum Gallery
1100 Bagby Street
Houston, Texas

Exhibition organized by the Heritage Society and
curated by Ginger Berni, Randolph K. Tibbits and Tam Kiehnhoff

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HOUSTON: IN THE NAME OF PROGRESS

GINGER BERNI

To read about the incredible changes that have taken place in the city of Houston over 130 years is impressive, no doubt. But *Houston Paints Houston* allows visitors the unique opportunity to experience those changes in visual form and by local artists who have their own feelings about the changes they too are witnessing. The artists are watching, recording and interpreting how Houstonians have shaped their environment. The exhibit captures how that development is often both incorporating and celebrating the area's natural beauty, while at the same time completely challenging it.

Emma Richardson Cherry's work, *Buffalo Bayou Flood Control* (page 12), illustrates the city's response to one of its biggest conflicts with nature: flooding. Houston suffered through several major floods even in its early years, often turning streets into what looked like raging rivers. The devastating floods of 1929 and 1935 exacted huge tolls on the city. Estimated property damage in 1929 was \$1.4 million, an astounding sum at the time. Losses more than doubled in 1935, when seven people were killed and the Port of Houston was crippled for months. Twenty-five blocks of the downtown business district and more than one hundred residential blocks were inundated with water.

Yet Houston's waterways and accessibility to the coast are the very reasons that the Allen brothers founded the city in 1836. David Adickes' nod to the past with his recreation of the 1894 Bird's Eye Map of Houston highlights the prominence of Buffalo Bayou. A major component of the city's economy is the ship channel. Grace Spaulding John titled one of her works *Where 17 Railroads Meet the Sea* (fig. 1), which was also a promotional slogan for

Houston as a hub for transporting goods (fig. 2). She and Buck Schiwetz captured workers unloading a ship and driving the economy. Harry Worthman's *Houston Ship Channel* (page 13) turns this active, industrial locale into something almost serene with a lone worker in the spot of grass in the foreground.

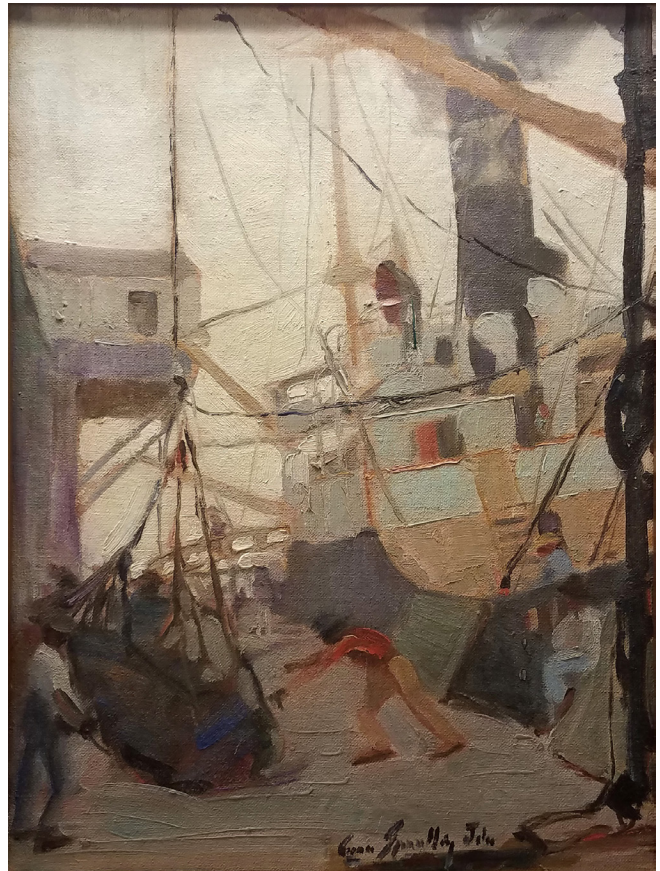


Fig. 1 Grace Spaulding John, *Where Seventeen Railroads Meet the Sea*, oil on canvas, 1924. Houston Public Library Collection, City of Houston.

Because so many of the houses and street scenes in *Houston Paints Houston* are no longer in existence, it is clear that elements of the city are constantly changing. Sometimes that



Fig. 2 *Buffalo Bayou and the Houston Ship Channel* 1890 - 1926, booklet, 1926. Permanent Collection of the Heritage Society.

change is painful, like so many of the buildings and homes being torn down after Hurricane Harvey. Sometimes those changes are exciting and necessary to accommodate a growing and diverse population. In these works you see the culture of Houston flourishing through its

architecture in universities, churches, museums and parks. Some of the most striking combinations of art and architecture of Houston are executed by Bill Condon. He captured the truthful vision of walking on Main Street in the 1960s, but with the artistic use of color and ghostly images to give it more of a surreal experience.

This exhibit illustrates how Houstonians have both embraced what nature has offered and altered it to fit our modern needs and create the thriving city of today. Despite the changes, one building spans the entirety of the exhibit. The home was built in 1850 and is captured by both Thomas Flintoff and by its later owner, Emma Richardson Cherry. This relic of antebellum Houston has moved four times over its history, and is now a part of The Heritage Society in Sam Houston Park. Although the building remains, by insisting on moving it, Houstonians forced a change in the environment to accommodate the greater desire for progress.

MERCURIAL HOUSTON

STEPHEN FOX

The paintings, drawings, and prints that Ginger Berni, Randy Tibbits and Tam Kiehnhoff have assembled for this exhibition invite you to generalize about what it is that artists see in Houston. Beyond art historical categorizations of *how* artists represent what they depict, it is also their choices of *what* to see that makes these works of art so fascinating.

The earliest works in the exhibition are the watercolors of the itinerant English artist Thomas Flintoff, painted in 1852. They represent a tradition of topographic art that was just about to lose its market currency to photography. Yet it is by virtue of Flintoff's use of color and the emphasis imparted with his brush strokes that he made the textures, hues, and rawness of frontier Houston palpable.

Is it only because we now look backward that many of the twentieth-century works seem haunted by a presumptive nostalgia for a Houston that artists sensed was dissolving before their eyes? Emma Richardson Cherry's painting of her studio, the Nichols-Rice-Cherry House, is suffused with nostalgia, but, paradoxically, so are her paintings that ostensibly record Houston's progress: excavating foundations for the Niels Eperson Building and re-engineering the downtown bend of Buffalo Bayou. Buck Schiwetz published a portfolio of prints, *Houston: Past and Present*, in 1927 that acknowledged this retrospective mood. Schiwetz included the Longcope House in his portfolio, although not the lowly corner store at Five Points with its sagging upper deck. In their portrayals of Main Street, Schiwetz and Grace

Spaulding John used the Victorian towers of the "old" (thirty-five years old) First Presbyterian Church to frame the modern skyline emerging farther down the street (fig. 1). Shifting the iconic point of view for representing Houston from Main Street to the downtown skyline marked a generational shift among Houston artists. When Bill Condon returned to Main Street in the 1960s, it was because, in Houston terms, Main Street had come to signify "old." The artists Penelope Lingan, Lloyd Bartells, Gene Charlton, Henri Gadbois, and Mary Ellen Shipnes seemed to gravitate to the old and worn, perhaps because age and decay disclosed a sense of experiential depth they found lacking



Fig. 1 Grace Spaulding John, *Main Street in the Rain*, 1924, Oil on canvas, Collection of Cynthia and Bill Gayden

in the shallowness and shininess of Houston's modern landscapes.

In the 1950s, '60s, and '70s, artists deployed Houston buildings and the skyline to negotiate the tension between representation and the imperative to paint abstractly. Condon, Frank Freed, Robert Preusser, and Robert Weimerskirch deconstructed architectural vistas and settings as if to release their inner essences. One sees something similar in Grace Spaulding John's contrasting images of Trinity Church as both somber and luminous. Even in the 1920s, artists had approached nature in Houston as consoling yet subversive. Margaret Brisbane, Frederic Browne, Grace Spaulding John, Emily Langham, and Leila McConnell discern nature as melting into a blur under the stress of incessant flatness, greenness, humidity, and, by the 1960s, pollution. Don Edelman's view from the bend of Buffalo Bayou that Emma Cherry painted forty years earlier shows the sky as tepid yellow: what sunlight looks like as it tries to penetrate dense smog.

Constructions of racial difference are another generational marker. One senses the lure of otherness in John's painting *Negro House on Dowling Street, Fifth Ward*, in contrast to the heroic workingman genre paintings she and Schiwetz produced of African American stevedores on the docks of the Houston Ship

Channel. Condon's shotgun cottages confront the harsh reality of racial segregation and economic disparity in a Southern city. Roy Thomas's paintings from the 1980s of people at a bus stop on a cold, blustery day and passersby on a weedy street corner neither sentimentalize nor idealistically ennoble daily life in a city whose icon of success, the downtown skyline, recedes tantalizingly into the background. Humor is present in Freed's depiction of a dozing museum guard and Gadbois's picture-within-a-picture, demonstrating artists' power to transmit subjective perceptions to their viewers.

What the artists in this exhibition chose to see in Houston was its mercurial quality. They looked with presumptive nostalgia to Houston's old, left-behind neighborhoods and to its ardent natural environment for alternatives to modern flatness and the destruction of emotional layering associated with rapid development. Artists sought to infuse the landscapes they saw with pathos in order to extract from the incessantly modernizing city a Houston in which they could feel at home.

Author's note: Stephen Fox is an architectural historian and a fellow of the Anchorage Foundation of Texas.



Herb Mears

Harris County Heritage Society Birthday Ball, 1976

Poster

20 x 20 in.

Permanent Collection of the Heritage Society, Houston

WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION



Emma Richardson Cherry

Buffalo Bayou Flood Control, 1937

Oil on canvas

37½ x 47½ in.

The John L. Nau III Collection of Texas Art



Grace Spaulding John

Smoke Steam and Mist #2, 1924

Oil on canvas

20⅞ x 18⅞ in.

Courtesy of the Bryan Museum,
Galveston



Margaret Brisbine

Untitled [Bayou Scene], c. 1920s

Oil on board

19½ x 15⅜ in.

Collection of Randy Tibbits and
Rick Bebermeyer, Houston



Edward Muegge (Buck) Schiwetz
Biggers Boat Garage, 1928
Colored pencil
12 x 8 in.
Collection of Lias J. (Jeff) Steen, Houston



Grace Spaulding John
Spring Comes to the Bayou, c. 1924
Oil on canvas
19 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 16 in.
Courtesy of the Bryan Museum, Galveston



Harry Worthman
Untitled [Houston Ship Channel], 1964
Watercolor
13 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 30 $\frac{1}{2}$ in.
Collection of Randy Tibbits and Rick Bebermeyer, Houston



Bill Condon

Houston Ship Channel, n.d.

Oil on panel

24 x 80 in.

Collection of Charles M. Peveto, Austin



Nione Carlson

Untitled, c. 1930s

Watercolor on paper

17½ x 23 in.

Collection of Tom and Tam Kiehnhoff,
Houston



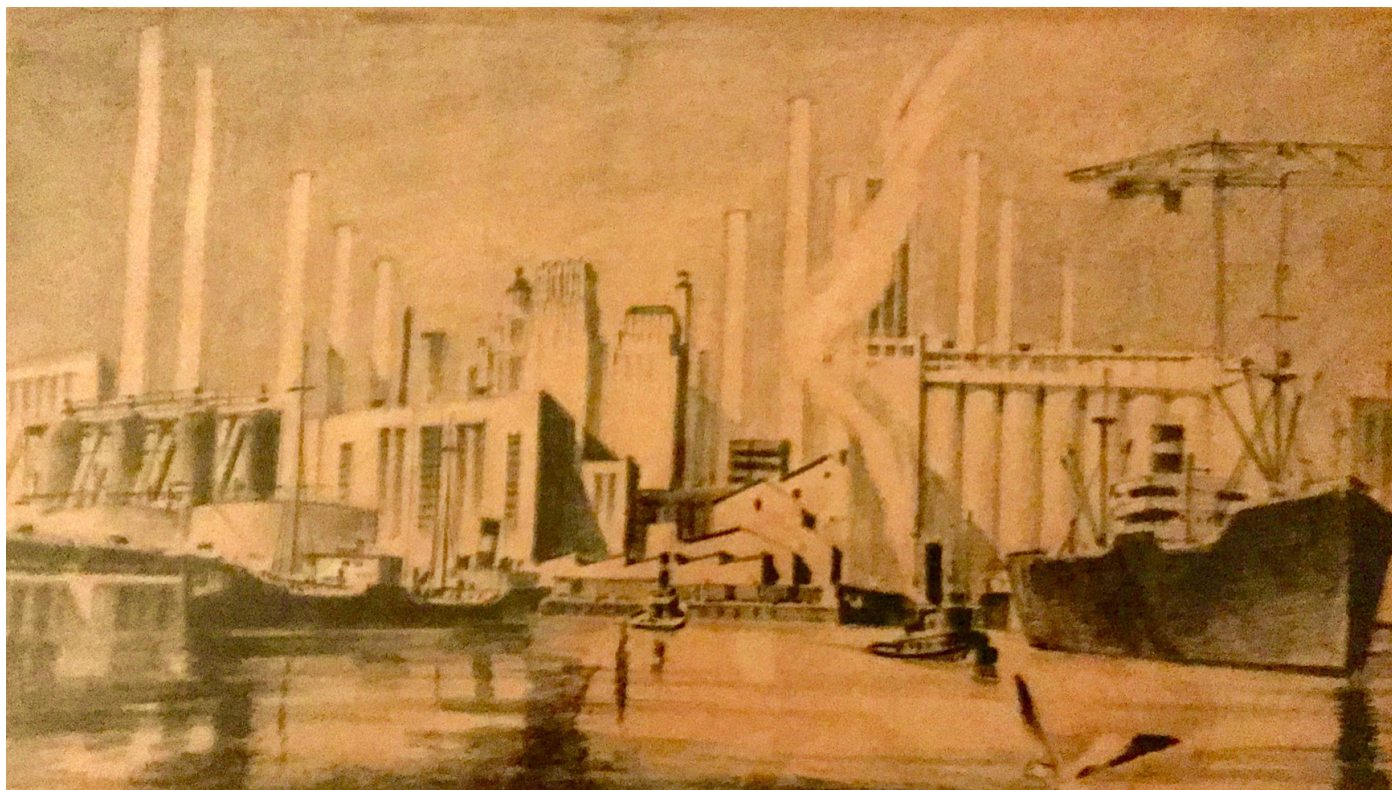
Leila McConnell

Refinery at Night, 1958

Oil on masonite

36 x 48 in.

Collection of Randy Tibbits and
Rick Bebermeyer, Houston



Edward Muegge (Buck) Schiwetz
Ship Channel, 1930s
Charcoal and pencil
8½ x 14½ in.
Collection of Lias J. (Jeff) Steen, Houston



Grace Spaulding John
Where Seventeen Railroads Meet the Sea, 1924
Oil on canvas
17 x 12 in.
Houston Public Library Collection,
City of Houston



Edward Muegge (Buck) Schiwetz
Unloading the Boat, 1950s
Watercolor and mixed media
12 x 16 in.
Collection of Lias J. (Jeff) Steen, Houston



Henri Gadbois

"Boomin" Houston, 1948

Ink and wash on paper

8 x 6¼ in.

Collection of Randy Tibbits and Rick Bebermeyer, Houston

Henri Gadbois

Residence on Leeland, 1948

Ink and wash on paper

6¾ x 8½ in.

Collection of Randy Tibbits and Rick Bebermeyer, Houston



Grace Spaulding John

House on Bissonnet, 1924

Oil on linen

36 x 30 in.

Collection of Rosenberg Library, Galveston, TX



Grace Spaulding John

Negro House on Dowling Street, Fifth Ward, n.d.

Oil on canvas

20 x 24 in.

Houston Public Library Collection,
City of Houston





Bill Condon

West Grey, Houston, Texas, 1954

Monoprint

5½ x 12 in.

Collection of Linda and Bill Reaves, Houston



Bill Condon

Untitled [Houses on West Grey], 1954

Gouache on board

11 x 13½ in.

Collection of Randy Tibbits and Rick Bebermeyer,
Houston



Gene Charlton

Street Scene, 1942

Oil on board

15 x 18 in.

Collection of Linda and Bill Reaves, Houston



Mary Ellen Shipnes

Hallie Pritchard Mansion (The Witch's Hat House), 1955

Watercolor

21¾ x 14 in.

Collection of Kim and Sean Ballesteros, Houston



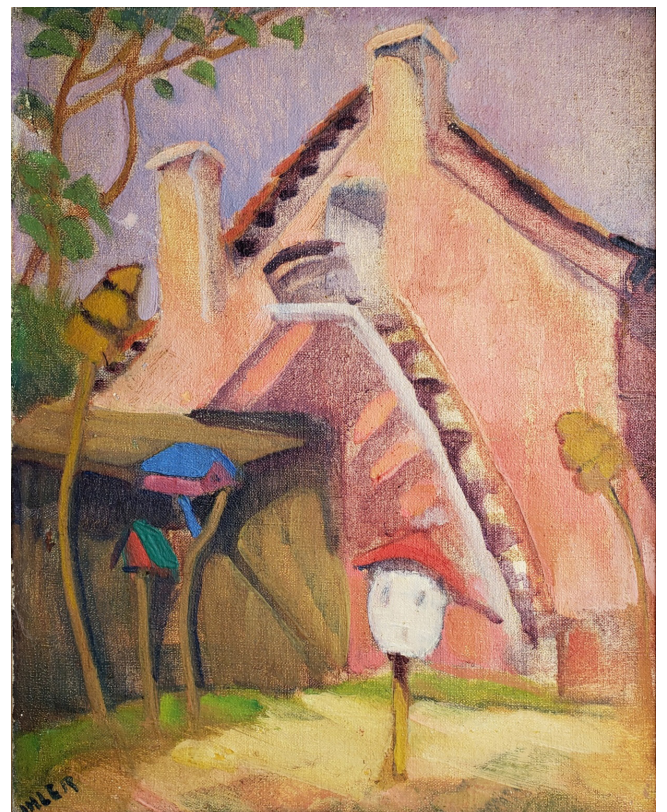
Robert Preusser

Untitled [Buildings at Night], 1938

Oil on panel

8 x 10 in.

Collection of Charles M. Peveto, Austin



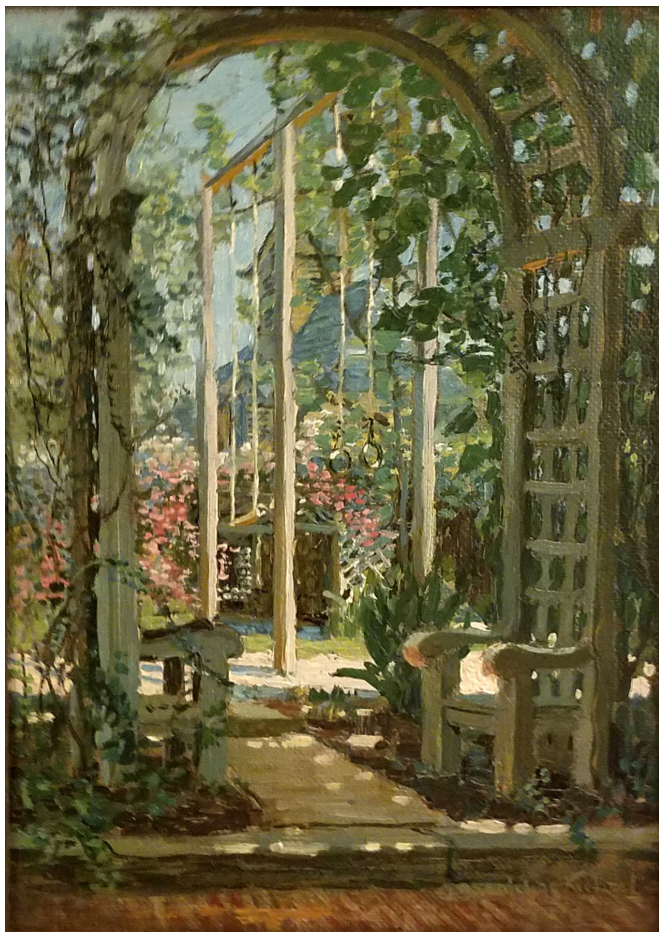
Ruth Pershing Uhler

Untitled [Five Bird Houses], c. late 1920s

Oil on canvas

15 x 12 in.

Collection of Randy Tibbits
and Rick Bebermeyer, Houston



Grace Spaulding John

Untitled [Garden], c. 1920

Oil on board

11½ x 8½ in.

Collection of Tom and Tam Kiehnhoff, Houston



Grace Spaulding John

Untitled [House], c. 1920

Oil on board

11½ x 8½ in.

Collection of Tom and Tam Kiehnhoff, Houston



Beulah Schiller Ayars

Scene on Buffalo Bayou, n.d.

Oil on canvas

30¼ x 40⅞ in.

The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

Gift of Beulah Schiller Ayars, 38.19



Emma Richardson Cherry
Untitled [Cherry House at Night], n.d.
Oil on canvas
29½ x 24½ in.
Permanent Collection of the Heritage Society,
Houston



Edward Muegge (Buck) Schiwetz
Old House on Chenevert, 1927
Pencil
9 x 7 in.
Collection of Lias J. (Jeff) Steen, Houston



Edward Muegge (Buck) Schiwetz
Untitled [Kellum-Noble House], 1958
Watercolor
20 x 24 in.
Permanent Collection of the Heritage Society, Houston



Frank Freed

Post Office, c. 1960

Watercolor

14½ x 21½ in.

Courtesy of Reaves | Foltz Fine Art

Frank Freed

Untitled [Museum Scene], c. 1960

Oil on canvas

19½ x 15½ in.

Collection of Tom and Tam Kiehnhoff, Houston





Emma Richardson Cherry
In the Beginning, Esperson Building, 1925
Oil on canvas
36 x 36 in.
Collection of Linda and Bill Reaves, Houston



Bill Condon
Untitled [Esperson Building Skyline], 1954
Watercolor and wax on board
28 x 17 in.
Collection of Randy Tibbits and
Rick Bebermeyer, Houston



Don Edelman
Gulf Building, c. 1971
Oil on board
26½ x 31⅞ in.
The John L. Nau III Collection of Texas Art



Thomas Flintoff

Market Place and Square, Houston, 1852

Watercolor

9½ X 13 in.

Collection of Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library



Thomas Flintoff

Court House, Houston, 1852

Watercolor

9½ X 13 in.

Collection of Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library



N. Napier

Houston City Hall, c. 1930

Charcoal on paper

27¼ x 35 in.

The John L. Nau III Collection of Texas Art



Edward Muegge (Buck) Schiwetz

San Jacinto Monument, 1953

Watercolor on paper

14¾ x 22 in.

The John L. Nau III Collection of Texas Art



Grace Spaulding John

Trinity Church at Night, 1925

Oil on board
16½ x 13¾ in.

Collection of Randy Tibbits and Rick Bebermeyer,
Houston



Grace Spaulding John

Trinity Church, 1925

Engraving
5½ x 4½ in.

Collection of Lisa Lipscomb and Brian Hill,
Houston



Thomas Flintoff

*Presbyterian, Methodist and
Baptist Churches, Houston, 1852*

Watercolor
9¾ x 13¾ in.

Collection of First Presbyterian
Church, Houston



Penelope Lingan

First Presbyterian Church, n.d.

Etching

4½ x 3½ in.

Permanent Collection of
the Heritage Society, Houston



Edward Muegge (Buck) Schiwetz

First Presbyterian Church, c. 1929

Etching on paper

8¾ x 11½ in.

The John L. Nau III Collection of Texas Art



Floyd Newsum

Night Watch, c. 1980s

Gouache on paper

26 x 40 in.

Private Collection, Austin



Bill Condon

Rice University, 1967

Oil on canvas board

7 x 13 in.

Collection of Linda and Bill Reaves, Houston



Bill Condon

The Rice Institute No. 4, 1959

Mixed media on wood panel

31 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 80 in.

The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. 34th Annual Houston Artists Exhibition, museum purchase prize, 1959, 59.28



James Chillman, Jr.

Rice Chemistry Building Under Construction, 1924

Watercolor

19 x 12¼ in.

Collection of Woodson Research Center,
Fondren Library, Rice University

William Ward Watkin

Residence Hall for Men, 1911

Watercolor

24¾ x 45 in.

Collection of Woodson Research Center,
Fondren Library, Rice University





Bill Condon

Rice Sallyport, n.d.

Acrylic

16 x 14 in.

Collection of Leila and
Henri Gadbois, Houston

Bill Condon

Academic Excellence, 1967

Oil on canvas

6 x 6½ in.

Collection of Charles M. Peveto, Austin



Henri Gadbois

The Larger Canvas, I, 1971

Oil

22 x 24 in.

Collection of Leila and Henri Gadbois, Houston



Henri Gadbois

The Larger Canvas, II, 1972

Oil

20 x 24 in.

Collection of Leila and Henri Gadbois, Houston



Henri Gadbois

Void For Lease, 1972

Oil

20 x 24 in.

Collection of Leila and Henri Gadbois, Houston





Emma Richardson Cherry

Showery Weather, c. 1946

Oil on board

9 x 12 in.

Collection of Randy Tibbits and
Rick Bebermeyer, Houston



Florence Grant

Winter in Houston, 1943

Oil on canvas

25 x 30 in.

Collection of Randy Tibbits and
Rick Bebermeyer, Houston



H.V. Gadbois

Bridge Over the Bayou, c. 1939

Oil

18 x 24 in.

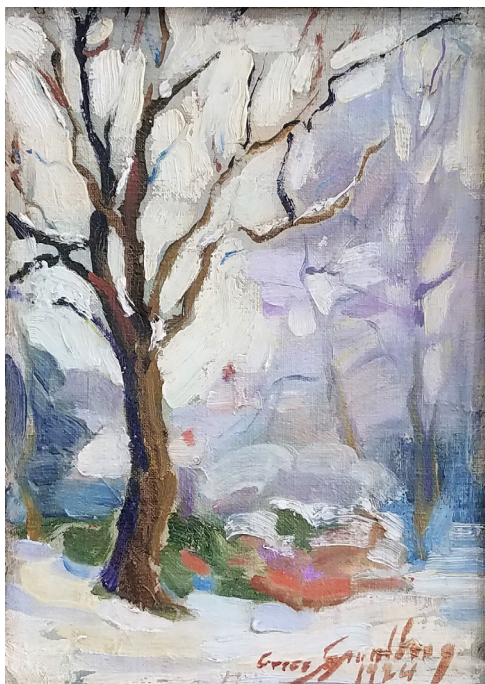
Collection of Leila and Henri Gadbois,
Houston



Grace Spaulding John
Holcombe Drive, 1925
Oil on canvas
28 x 24 in.
Houston Public Library Collection,
City of Houston



Frederic Browne
Trees in Hermann Park, n.d.
Oil on canvas
30 x 25 in.
The John L. Nau III Collection of Texas Art



Grace Spaulding John
Snow in Houston, 1924
Oil on canvas
8 x 6 in.
Houston Public Library Collection,
City of Houston



Emily Langham
Green Summer, 1927
Watercolor
11½ x 8½ in.
Collection of Randy Tibbits and
Rick Bebermeyer, Houston



Jack Pagan

Untitled [Montrose Boulevard], 1942

Watercolor

9 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 13 $\frac{1}{2}$ in.

Collection of Randy Tibbits and Rick Bebermeyer,
Houston

Jack Pagan

Untitled [Houston Street], 1942

Watercolor

9 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 13 in.

Collection of Randy Tibbits and Rick Bebermeyer,
Houston





Edward Muegge (Buck) Schiwetz

The Circus, c. 1933

Watercolor on wove paper

17¹⁵/₁₆ x 25³/₈ in.

The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. 9th Annual Houston Artists Exhibition, museum purchase prize, 1933, 33.1



Chester Snowden

Polar Bear, 1945

Oil on canvas

13¹/₂ x 15¹/₂ in.

Collection of Tom and Tam Kiehnhoff, Houston



Chester Snowden

Waiting Their Act, 1945

Oil on canvas

14 x 16 in.

Collection of Randy Tibbits and Rick Bebermeyer, Houston



Penelope Lingan

Houston Market Scene, n.d.

Oil on Canvas

14 x 10 in.

Permanent Collection of the Heritage Society, Houston



Lloyd Bartells

St. Joseph's Hospital, Houston, 1955

Oil on canvas

24 x 29 in.

Collection of Linda and Bill
Reaves, Houston



Edward Muegge (Buck) Schiwetz

Architectural Rendering, 1930s

Watercolor and pen

6¾ x 17 in.

Collection of Lias J. (Jeff) Steen, Houston



Bill Condon

Houston, n.d.

Watercolor on paper

46½ x 33¾ in.

The John L. Nau III Collection of Texas Art



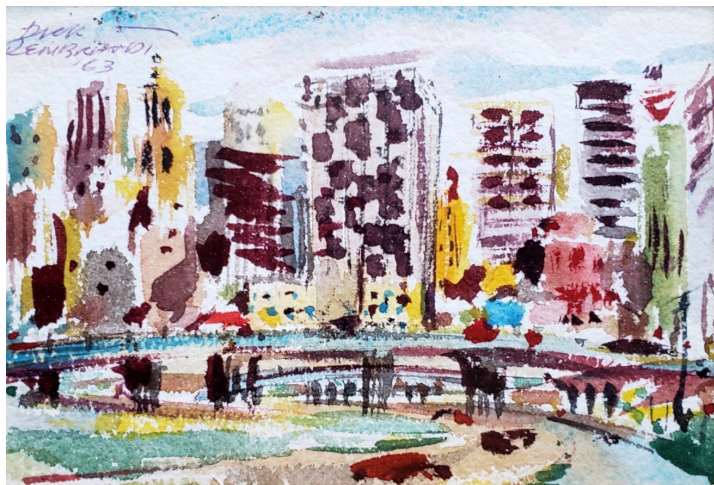
Lloyd Bartells

Main Street, Houston, 1954

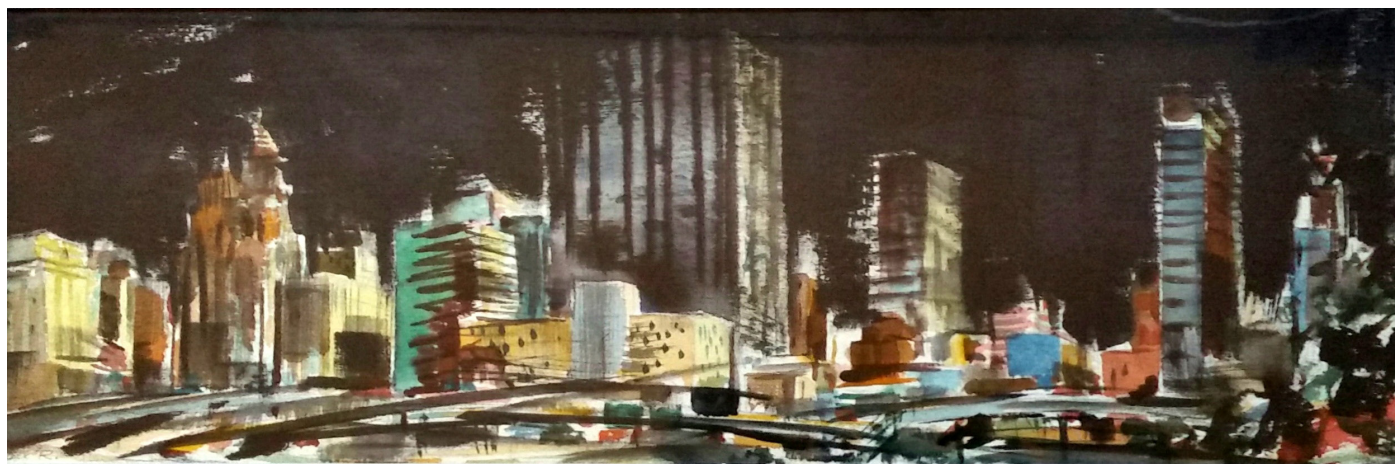
Oil on canvas

22 x 17 in.

Collection of Linda and Bill Reaves, Houston



Dick Rembrandt
Untitled [Houston Skyline], 1963
Watercolor
3 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 4 $\frac{5}{8}$ in.
Collection of Randy Tibbits and Rick Bebermeyer, Houston



Dick Rembrandt
Untitled [Houston Skyline], 1960s
Watercolor
6 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 18 in.
Collection of Randy Tibbits and Rick Bebermeyer, Houston

Don Edelman
Untitled [Downtown Houston], 1969
Oil on masonite
14 x 28 in.
Collection of Linda and Bill Reaves, Houston





Bill Condon

Main Street Houston, n.d.

Oil

60 x 50 in.

Collection of Leila and Henri

Gadbois, Houston

Roy Vinson Thomas

Inner City Blues, 1981

Acrylic on canvas

24 x 18 in.

Collection of Linda and Bill Reaves, Houston

Roy Vinson Thomas

The Stop, 1983

Acrylic on canvas

30 x 30 in.

Courtesy of the artist and
Reaves | Foltz Fine Art



Roy Vinson Thomas

Holding On, 1987

Acrylic on canvas

48 x 36 in.

Courtesy of the artist and

Reaves | Foltz Fine Art

Bill Condon

Untitled [Houston Skyline], n.d.

Oil on cardboard

5½ x 3⅝ in.

Collection of Randy Tibbits and

Rick Bebermeyer, Houston

Bill Condon

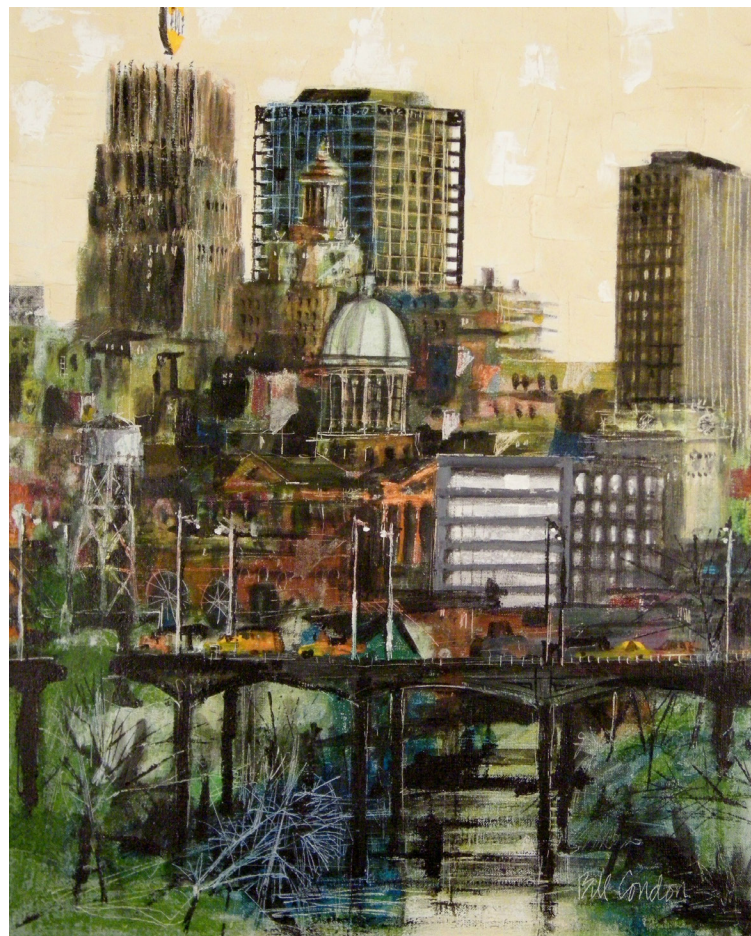
Family Service Center, c. 1969

Oil on canvas

24 x 20 in.

Collection of Randy Tibbits and

Rick Bebermeyer, Houston





Robert Weimerskirch
Untitled [Houston Skyline], 1974
Oil on canvas
23 ½ x 29 ½ in.
Private Collection, Houston



Dorothy House
Untitled [City Vista, Houston], 1958
Oil on panel
12 x 48 in.
Collection of Linda and Bill Reaves, Houston



David Adickes

1894 Houston (Bird's Eye Map), 1955

Painted mural at the Houston Club (Razed 2014)

Photograph courtesy of Syd Moen



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